

Draft for Discussion and Review

3/24/04 – Version 4

Planning and Preserving ‘Sconset

No planner could have created a ‘Sconset. If there ever was a community that “just happened” it is our village. It enters recorded memory as a bluff where Wampanoags ranged and watched for whales. Then it was a settlement where cod fishermen built shacks on the beach and more solid cottages on the bluff. As Nantucket town prospered it became a vacation spot for town gentry to locate their families in the summer. Mainlanders discovered it, and came to build the large square summer homes that still march up Baxter Avenue along the bluff to Sankaty Light. A developer, charmed by the fishermen’s cottages, built a second batch in the 1880s. Homes of more sophisticated design grew up along Main Street, set well back behind high hedges. The “bohemian” theater set discovered us for awhile, moving into cottages and loosening the lifestyle. Off-islanders kept coming, building large relaxed summer homes. In the last thirty years airplanes and better highways have begun to bring half of America, it seems, down Milestone Road. The newer, increasingly elaborate homes resemble the mainland suburbs more than the old bluff styles.

In ‘Sconset, history is written in these neighborhoods and in these homes. The layered record of houses ranging from subsistence cottages to mansions forms the unique mix that is ‘Sconset; that brings back off-islanders generation after generation. It draws tourists by bike and bus. It holds special memories for the many year-rounders who grew up in Siasconset and have built the island’s houses and businesses.

Increasingly, the distinct charms of this fragile village are threatened by the wealth and population pressures that wash across the whole island and the country. There are 700 homes in ‘Sconset today. Another 2200 potentially allowed by zoning, may be built in the years to come. The village can’t “just happen” anymore and remain ‘Sconset except in name and memory. We have parking, noise and traffic problems in the summer, sewage and water concerns, a growing worry about affordable housing, and an ongoing debate using terms like “build-out” and “in-fill;” words that never would have passed a ‘Sconseter’s lips in all those years it took to become, willy-nilly, what we are.

Grace Stanshigh Yates, who was born in a small cottage in Codfish Park in 1932, was recently interviewed for a forthcoming book on ‘Sconset by Nancy Newhouse. She said:

“Retain the character. Because I don’t care what anybody says, when I walk down stone gully or the steps, there’s an entirely different feeling that comes over you. It’s a little bit of heaven, right here, and people don’t realize it.”

The message is clear: After three centuries of improvising, it’s time to plan.

A Closer Look

First, let’s be clear. We are not talking about planning neighborhoods and houses solely because we feel strongly about their physical characteristics. We are also hoping to preserve and enhance the sense of place, of community, which has evolved for so many years. The unique ‘Sconset atmosphere is rooted in a sense of place as strong as the salt tang in the air. Call it a Sconset State of Mind.

We value ‘Sconset’s physical community as much as we do because of historic significance and its validity, but also because it is the touchstone of this state of mind. It begins, on the bluff north of the town center, with those old “Whale Cottages” which caused architectural historian Henry Chandlee Forman to write “There is no doubt that ‘Sconset at about the time of the American Revolution was the most unusual village in New England and perhaps in the United States.” Those cottages inspired a generation of other cottages built by Edward Underhill in the 1880s. They are two blocks southwest of the flagpole.

There is Codfish Park, the wide beach-level community where the first fishermen built their shacks and generations of native Nantucketers lived “Down-bank,” in the vernacular still used in our parents’ time. Those “shacks” are now chic, and they hold many summer visitors as well as year-rounders.

Stretching a mile from Sankaty light to the north, all along the bluff, through the village center and southwest along the dunes until the bluff disappears all the way to Tom Nevers, is a collection of larger homes overlooking the ocean. This is “Up-bank” -Baxter Road and Ocean Avenue and Low Beach Road. Many of these homes date back to the 19th Century, although there has been recent development along Low Beach Road and the west side of Baxter..

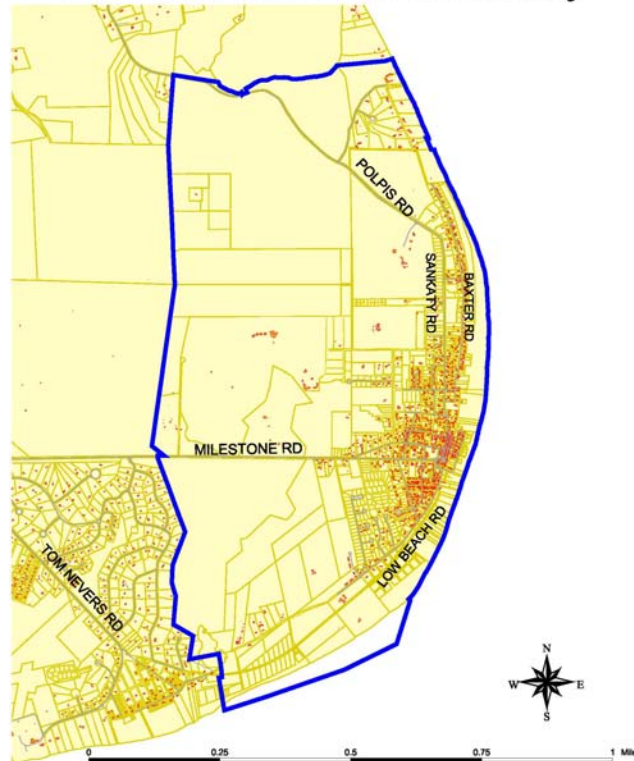
Inland, to the south, there are larger homes from the late 19th and early 20th century back to Morey Lane and beyond. To the north, behind the Whale Cottages and Baxter Road, are houses of a generally modest scale, most of them less than two full stories. They sit on a grid that reaches back three and sometimes four blocks to Burnell, on the edge of the moors – and the golf course. This central area, while not as distinctive architecturally as the bluff homes or the cottages, is restrained and comfortable. It includes a variety of architectural styles.

One road – Plainfield – now stretches another long block west, perhaps presaging where the next layer of ‘Sconset will arise, should growth continue. From Low Beach Road north to the Golf Course, the newest completed subdivisions and those yet undeveloped on the map tend to create a carpet of large homes on large lots arrayed along “lollipop” (cul-de-sac) one-entrance streets unconnected with the village in any way except proximity. Development in this area, both in home design and land use, seem to owe more to generic mainland suburbia than ‘Sconset.

And of course down the center of it all, emerging from Milestone Road at the top of Bunker hill, is Main Street, shaded by ancient maples, lined by wide strips of grass which run up to hedges fronting just more than a dozen expansive homes. It ends at the flagpole, surrounded by roses and curbs where generations of residents and visitors sit to eat their ice cream cones. Behind it is the Post Office, and the Bookstore, the Café and Claudette’s Sandwich Shop. To the left is the Casino. Just ahead is the Market, and some parking. This is Main Street, ‘Sconset’s downtown, its statement.

The village stretches about a mile and a half north and south along the beach from Sesachacha Pond to Tom Nevers. It’s just more than half a mile east and west, from the beach to the Golf Course. It is blessed with a superb location. This plan prepares us to preserve what we have and to deal with what’s and to deal with what’s coming.

'Sconset Area Plan Boundary



A Vision of ‘Sconset’s Future

The vision is of a village that preserves the look and feel of 325 years of history, yet is livable and comfortable in the 21st Century. It is not a Williamsburg, not a theme park, not a display of antiques frozen in amber, but a living community that continues to have a strong sense of itself. It is able to handle growth, but it will not be overwhelmed by additional ‘Sconseters anymore than the Whale Cottages were replaced by the homes of Baxter Road. It is a community with understandable rules, person-oriented rules, for building homes and gardens and fitting them into the existing neighborhood.

The best way to preserve ‘Sconset is to stop growth. That is not a realistic expectation. But growth can be slowed and guided, through a combination of initiatives including proper zoning, revision of subdivision practices, management of sewage capacity, and the impact of public and private initiatives including conservation restrictions and the activities of the ‘Sconset Trust and other organizations devoted to land preservation. Maximizing the impact of these factors, in addition to joining whatever island-wide initiatives develop to moderate the spread of housing, gives ‘Sconset a real chance to influence its destiny. The opportunity for controlling its future, for both minimizing and handling growth, is this Plan.

Nevertheless, the ‘Sconset envisioned by this Plan will look very much as it looks today. Most growth will be around the fringes. The parts of the village that express its past – the cottage-lined streets like Shell, Center, Front, Lily and Pochik will change very little, if at all. Main Street has its own distinctive character. As the gateway to the village, it must not change. Baxter Road and Ocean Avenue have homes a hundred years old, and more, and their open stance on the bluff is a marvelous aspect of the town. It is where ‘Sconset breathes in the beach and the sea “all the way to Portugal,” and in this vision it must not change appreciably.

If there is a need to accommodate new construction, the goal is to have the Village extend its current street grid (with a few streets wandering a bit, as they always have). Interconnectedness is a vital aspect of this Village. Self-contained developments will not contribute to the ‘Sconset of the future. In much of the Village, on this grid, somewhat larger and somewhat smaller structures- neither Baxter nor Shell – will continue to be the homes of most residents, reflecting the relaxed designs of generations of homes that were built for summer folks and for year-rounders, side by side. Some existing homes will be renovated and rebuilt. Some vacant lots will be filled. Second homes will be built on some properties. In all these cases, the plan proposes that architectural guidelines will ensure that the new construction is in keeping with the neighborhood where it takes place. The scale and height of neighborhoods will be preserved.

In this ‘Sconset of the projected future, the commercial center stays the same size. It is often overwhelmed by summer residents, as well as neighbors from Tom Nevers and Quidnet and points north for two months each year, but it serves the community well. It is

in keeping with the needs of citizens and the bikers and bus tourists, birders and beachers and people from all over the island looking for a good meal or just a warm blueberry muffin.

‘Sconset is a distinct community that contributes in great measure to the distinctiveness and uniqueness of Nantucket all a whole. Yet, despite this distinctiveness, ‘Sconset is no less a part of Nantucket than Madaket, Quidnet, or Mid-Island. A high percentage of village homes were built when transportation to and from Nantucket was by buggy or train. Those days are over, and ‘Sconseters rely even more than in the past on essential Island services for all of its basic needs - no different than the rest of the Island.

‘Sconset is one of the chief tourist attractions on the island, a role it would quickly lose if this Vision allowed it to evolve into the homogeneity of suburban development patterns. The ‘Sconset of this Vision continues to enrich the whole island with its diverse architecture, the clear expression of the past written in its homes and cottages, and its intense attraction for summer tourists.

The Comprehensive (“Comp”) Plan in its wisdom foresaw that Nantucket’s communities and neighborhoods would retain their local characteristics, yet fit into the overall economic, political and social fabric of the island. That is true of this Plan for ‘Sconset. It envisions a ‘Sconset that interacts fully with all of Nantucket, sharing issues from housing to growth to traffic. ‘Sconset is part of Nantucket and wants to share in the island’s future. Second, ‘Sconseters are proud of the Village. They are motivated by that pride, and this Plan is driven by it.

This Plan envisions an easy community to live in, as it is now. A place where homes are built in a way that shows an awareness they are not alone, any more than their occupants are alone; that they join in a community of other houses just as their occupants join village society. By preserving this continuity of physical community, villagers may continue to have their ‘Sconset State of Mind. By maintaining its own character and distinctiveness, ‘Sconset will always be a place to come home to, over Bean Hill.

To achieve that vision, our goal is to preserve the character, feel and lifestyle of ‘Sconset and its various neighborhoods.

The Strategy

The strategy in pursuit of that goal must be fully based on the reality of what exists here, rather than theory about places generally, and on the shared values of this community. That is why those eleven subcommittees were formed. For example, the planning intentions expressed by ten of those committees rest on voluntary actions, not

regulations. The strategic directions that are common across all eleven topical areas are these:

1. **Join in island-wide measures when they serve the same ends that ‘Sconseters seek. Unfettered growth threatens to overwhelm both the village and the island. Island-wide measures to address that can be complemented in the Village in the Village’s own way, through encouraging all kinds of voluntary actions, through purchase of conservation restrictions, and by any other measures available, to slow growth in the village.**
2. **Work with the Nantucket Historic District Commission (HDC), the Planning Board and whatever other agencies are relevant to ensure that implementing strategies are carried out in an effective, sensitive and understandable manner.**
3. **Stay in touch with our roots. Keep checking with the subcommittees, the Civic Association and the citizens to make sure the vision is fresh, and our efforts are well coordinated with each other and are the right ones.**

Zoning and Preservation

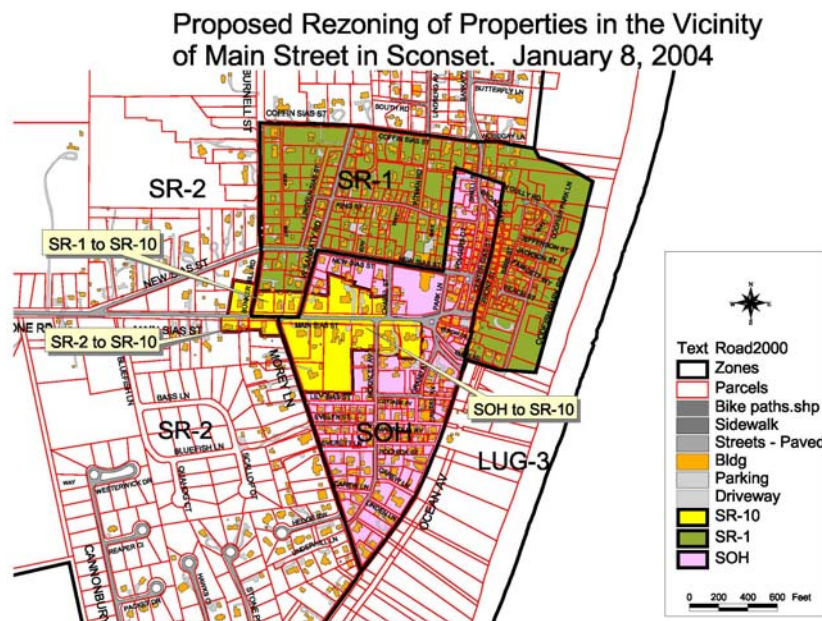
The *Zoning and Preservation Committee* realized that it could not make suggestions for the future that rely solely on voluntary compliance. To achieve the goal in this area, the Committee developed these strategies:

1. **Ensure that guidance for development in the Village is based on the reality of what exists in this special place. Through the planning process, major efforts have been invested in (1) confirming that Nantucketers really want to keep the character of ‘Sconset and (2) carefully documenting what exists, rather than relying on a generic model from other places.**
2. **Develop ways to identify the distinctions among the various neighborhoods of ‘Sconset in terms of their history and architecture. Just as Nantucket as a whole is enhanced by the variations among its areas and villages, ‘Sconset is enriched by the sharp distinctions among its neighborhoods.**
3. **Create a way, based on measurements of actual buildings and standards based on those measurements, to ensure that future construction is in agreement with historical patterns.**

4. **Build on not only ‘Sconset’s physical heritage, but also on our institutional heritage. Current organizational structure and rules, when working well, should provide a base on which to build. For example, current zoning can serve ‘Sconset well with two exceptions: Main Street, and guidance reflecting the Architectural Neighborhoods of the Village. Rather than seeking wholesale change, this plan attempts to address the exceptions, keeping what works.**

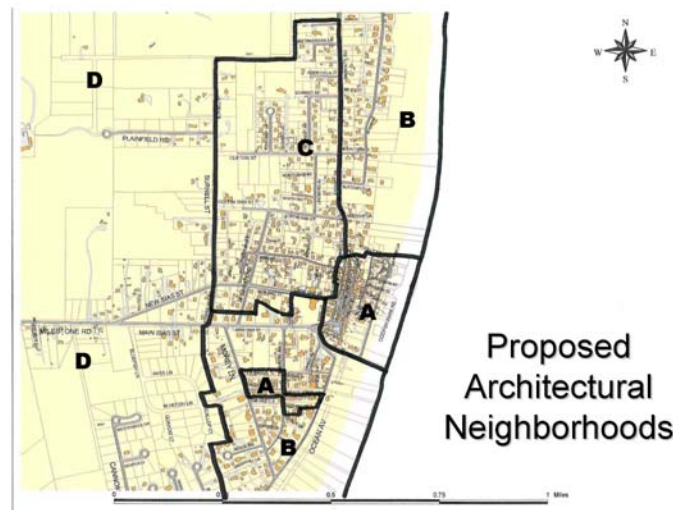
Consistent with that, the following actions should be pursued:

- I. Create a new Zoning District for Main Street. Main Street has a powerful and valued unity that is not reflected in its zoning. Main Street’s zoning is largely Siasconset Old Historic (SOH), but it is also divided into two other zoning districts, and none of those districts are consistent with either what is there now or what is intended for the future. Lots currently have area and frontage substantially exceeding current zoning, which is an invitation to disruptive change. New SR (‘Sconset Residential)-10 District rules have been carefully designed for Main Street so that in protecting what exists they also minimize non-conformities. (See Appendix for the proposed Warrant Article implementing this change). Changes in the district configurations covering a small number of nearby lots is also intended in order to provide consistency with the resulting context.



- II. Neither Zoning nor the HDC’s classic *Building with Nantucket in Mind* adequately describe or assure the form that development should take for consistency with what exists within ‘Sconset. No single description or

guidance can do the job because of the wide variations that exist among the sub-areas of the Village. Accordingly, this plan proposes four Architectural Neighborhoods within 'Sconset. (See Map). These neighborhoods, originally defined by the Siasconset Advisory Board to the HDC, will delineate areas where houses are similar in style, mass and height, and in some cases, history. Neighborhood "A" includes the historic cottages on the Bluff and Codfish Park. Neighborhood "B" encompasses the Baxter Road, Ocean Avenue, Morey Lane and Main Street areas of larger homes. Neighborhood "C" begins at New Street and extends north inland of Baxter Road and associated properties, and east of Burnell Street, north to Eldridge Lane. It includes homes of varied history and architectural styles, but intermediate in compactness and scale. Neighborhood "D" covers the remaining outlying parts of the Village, as defined for the Area Plan.



Discussion of these neighborhoods with the HDC will further refine the boundaries and identify the important characteristics of each one.

- III. Develop an approach to zoning that can assure that new development is consistent with the kind of building massing and scale that characterizes each of the Architectural Neighborhoods of 'Sconset. Field research suggests that a major key is how roofs are configured. Roof forms in 'Sconset are typically complex, with various elements of individual buildings having different heights. Not only are the pitch and height to the roof ridge important but equally important is how close to the ground the eaves come in the various building elements. Assuring building with 'Sconset in mind means attending to the complexity of ridges and eaves in new buildings and alterations, rather than using one measure, the highest point of any roof, as the basis for control.

To frame such guidance, the Committee and the Work Group are working in collaboration with the HDC and the ‘Sconset Advisory Board (SAB). Field measurements of representative houses in each Neighborhood are being taken, arriving at descriptive data for ridges and eave heights. Then, working with the HDC, guidance based on these measurements will be developed as a basis for designing new construction or modification of houses in each neighborhood. The goal is an approach that will allow more creative designs than simple maximum dimensional regulations would produce. It will ensure that the ridge heights, eave heights and mass are consistent with the neighborhoods within which change is taking place and that it will respect the architectural diversity within each neighborhood.

That approach is intended to initially be used by the HDC and the SAB in their review of building proposals. Depending upon the observed outcomes of experience with that approach over several years, it will be reconsidered, perhaps revised, and possibly proposed for implementation through zoning, as well, if that then seems appropriate.

This Plan also intends to explore other issues that are important to ‘Sconset’s character. An example is foundation height. Soaring property values have created a rush to dig cellars for extra living space, pushing the traditionally low-lying ‘Sconset homes up well above ground level, creating a curious and inauthentic look. This is all an ongoing, difficult process, and the Committee is grateful to the HDC for its cooperation with the initial development of this new approach.

- IV. Every effort will be made to work with the Planning Board and the HDC and whatever other bodies are relevant, to encourage or require different patterns of development and construction in Architectural Neighborhood “D,” the outlying areas of ‘Sconset. This will entail changes to the Subdivision Rules and Regulations, as well as voluntary collaboration of owners, in order to better tailor subdivisions to fit with ‘Sconset’s character. Revised standards for roads, drainage and utilities also need to be created so that this area is in keeping with ‘Sconset’s character. We intend to gain compatibility of scale and connectedness. This would include an end to “lollipop” subdivisions and encouragement of cluster-type development. The approach that has resulted in wall-to-wall even distribution of house lots in outlying areas needs to be abandoned in favor of developing the land best suited for development and conserving the land best suited for environmental and open space values. There is a long way to go in this area and it is an uphill battle, but this is certainly one of this Plan’s very top priorities.
- V. The concept of a Greenbelt around the Village is vital to ‘Sconset’s future. While enshrined in the Comprehensive Plan, it currently has no legal or regulatory protection, and is threatened by several subdivisions. Under this Plan, every effort will be made to preserve the Greenbelt, whether through

actions of the Planning Board, retirement of land through the Land Bank or the actions of private organizations lie the 'Sconset Trust, or other initiatives. In addition, the process of preserving the integrity of 'Sconset will be greatly aided by the creation of a 'Sconset Sewer District, as is proposed in a Warrant Article for the 2004 Town Meeting. We urge the passage of this measure.

Beyond Zoning and Preservation

The other ten subcommittees working toward 'Sconset's future produced a variety of proposals for preserving and guiding the affairs of the community. In doing this, many of them met and cooperated with Town officials. Then, over time, the committees, in consultation with these officials, will continue to operate in the future, possibly within the structure of the Civic Association. This plan is definitely not a short-term affair. Over time the committees will continue to shape life in the village, refreshing their viewpoints, and implementing the agendas which they developed for this plan. Those include:

- The *Affordable Housing Subcommittee* recommended that 'Sconseters should re-constitute their property allowing for the sale of a secondary dwellings or a piece of the property for affordable housing. In fact, Article 36 of the 2004 Annual Town Meeting would implement this objective by permitting the subdivision of secondary dwellings provided an affordable housing covenant is in place. We support this article. It also envisioned the purchase and resale of properties suitable for affordable housing. A 'Sconset group has, in fact, entered the market to do just that.

- The *Peace and Quiet Subcommittee* identified the major landscape and lawn services that work in 'Sconset. It contacted the National Noise Pollution Clearinghouse, and held a demonstration of quiet lawn equipment, in the village, for contractors and citizens. At least one major contractor has purchased this equipment for 'Sconset use.

- The *Public Transportation Subcommittee* developed a program to encourage use of the NRTA seasonal transportation system through posters, renter's packets, and announcements at public meetings.

- The *Traffic and Safety Subcommittee* continued its famous "20 is Plenty" program, emphasized bike education clinics for kids, and encouraged more strict parking enforcement against violators who clog the narrow streets.

- The *Wastewater Committee* determined that the most important factor affecting wastewater treatment is land development and new housing. It recommended that preservation restrictions and secondary dwelling restrictions be encouraged and that citizen support of the Trust be increased.

-The *Water Committee* recommended that existing facilities be upgraded, a new water tower be built, water meters installed, and island-wide water restrictions be implemented.

-The *Beach Preservation Committee* proposed that existing dewatering systems be managed to maximum effectiveness, fundraising continue and that the Lighthouse South system be closely watched. If it replicates Codfish Park accretion, additional systems might be developed.

-The *Land Preservation Committee* proposed implementation and defense of a greenbelt around the village (such a belt is described in the Nantucket Island Comprehensive Plan), and fostering of a clear demarcation between the Country and the Village. It encouraged preservation restrictions on property throughout the community, possible restrictions on some of the historic gardens of 'Sconset, and conservation of small open spaces within the village.

-The *Emergency Preparedness Committee* recommended identifying in advance steps which could be taken in advance of an emergency: marking roads, designating a command center, training in first aid, developing an evacuation plan, etc. It suggested working with town departments to identify steps that would be taken for recovery and cleanup.

-The *Communications Committee* encouraged the use of "Saving 'Sconset" as a guide for communicating to newcomers and others the essence of the village, and proposed to set up a distribution system for the book. It foresaw an ongoing program to share information about this plan within the village and around the island.

The subcommittees made many other recommendation (see the "Composite of Actions" in the appendix), but these should be sufficient to indicate that 'Sconset has developed, in addition to the plan, a related ongoing community-based structure to deal with all aspects of community life. Keeping that structure healthy and productive is a last, central part of the plan itself. The Plan is a thing, but it is also a process. The citizen-based institutions that the village has developed over the past five years are the best insurance that the Plan will be relevant and renewed.

How the Plan was Developed

The Town of Nantucket provided the structure to plan for 'Sconset's future. In the Nantucket Comprehensive Community Plan, ratified by Town Meeting in January, 2001, is listed one of the goals:

"Develop Neighborhood Area Plans through a partnership of neighborhood residents, planners, and local boards and commissions. These plans will enable residents in each area to provide direct input to guide growth in the neighborhoods and communities."

‘Sconset began its planning over five years ago. There was talk that the island would get a “Comp Plan.” ‘Sconset didn’t want to be left out. There was a dinner, more talk, a walking tour of the village, an Ad Hoc Committee. The Civic Association began to talk about planning in its summer meetings. The Ad Hoc Committee petitioned the ‘Sconset Civic Association and the ‘Sconset Trust to sponsor its work jointly with the Nantucket Planning and Economic Development Commission (NP&EDC). That winter one group began to put together “*Saving ‘Sconset,*” a book sponsored by the Trust on Siasconset’s history, traditions and architecture that ended as a wakeup call, a warning that the quality of village life was clearly threatened.

Committees were formed and began to explore the issues. In 2000 the ‘Sconset Village Plan Work Group (“Work Group”) consisting of ‘Sconset residents and residents and officials from the Town at large was formed to ensure that all interests were connected to the planning process. The 2001 Town Meeting amended the Comprehensive Plan to change the designation of ‘Sconset from “Town” to “Village.” Through all this process from that first summer to date, developers of this Plan worked closely with NP&EDC Director John Pagini and the NP&EDC. A consultant, Philip Herr, of Philip B. Herr Associates of Newton Corner, MA, was retained. More than 80% of his work has been financed by the community of ‘Sconset. The NP&EDC very helpfully, supplied the balance.

The Ad Hoc Committee became the Siasconset Area Planning Committee. It inevitably (and properly) did what committees do: it established subcommittees. These subcommittees were charged with examining all aspects of our village’s life, looking into the future, and suggesting to the Planning Committee and Work Group elements of our final document. There were eleven subcommittees in all, composed of 78 ‘Sconseters, who spent more than two summer seasons, sitting in dining rooms and on porches, sharing and refining their views of the future.

SUBCOMMITTEES OF THE ‘SCONSET PLANNING COMMITTEE

Zoning and Preservation
Affordable Housing
Traffic and Safety
Peace and Quiet
Land Preservation

Wastewater
Water
Public Transportation
Beach Preservation
Emergency Preparedness

Communications

The process was slow and thorough. In the fall of 2002 the eleven groups made their reports and recommendations. Then the Planning Committee, reviewing the reports, had a thought. Because 85% of the Village goes back to the mainland in the fall (the

figure for the island is 75%), it felt the necessity to be sure the voices of the year-round residents were not lost. So after the committee reports were presented at a community meeting in September, they were combined in a “Composite of Actions” and mailed to all the winter residents, asking them to respond. Then the Planning Committee interviewed as many of the winter residents as it could. No markedly different views emerged.

The summer of 2003 was the home stretch. In June the Committee presented the Composite of Actions at a public hearing in the High School sponsored by the NP&EDC and the Work Group. Then it circulated them at both summer meetings of the Civic Association.

All along, the Planning Committee was building the outlines of the actual Plan from the recommendations of the subcommittees. It was obvious that the subject area requiring the most careful development involved the report of the Zoning and Preservation Committee, which would result in warrant articles before the Town Meeting, and a set of architectural guidelines for consideration by the HDC. Decisions were made. Letters were sent to every villager, announcing a late August meeting. First the Executive Committee of the Civic Association was briefed, and then, on August 17, the community-wide meeting was held at the Casino. There were comments and concerns, but an informal show of hands at the end of the meeting revealed only two dissenters. Clearly, the Planning Committee’s vision, derived from the grassroots of the village, reflected the vision of ‘Sconset residents. The Committee did not yet have proposals set in stone, but based on the vision of ‘Sconset which was so widely shared, it knew where it wanted to go.

Through the fall the drafters kept refining the plan. Through informal consultations with HDC members and consultant Herr, they developed an approach to architectural neighborhoods. In January the Planning Committee took the plan outline and the specific proposal for zoning to the NP&EDC. The NP&EDC endorsed the direction of the Plan, and agreed to sponsor the zoning articles on behalf of the Committee and the Work Group. The Committee sent letters outlining the final zoning proposal to all landowners affected. Because some revisions had been made both to the zoning and architectural neighborhood proposals, the drafters sent updated copies to Planning Committee members who lived off-island. The warrant article sponsored by the NP&EDC was accepted for inclusion in the warrant by the Board of Selectmen, and referred to the Planning Board. The articles, now combined into one, received the unanimous recommendation of the Planning Board.

The process within the community, what the Planning Committee chairperson calls “Community Development 101,” had developed a vision of the future. Community support is building for that vision.

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Appendix A

Composite of Actions

**‘Sconset Village Area Plan:
Composite of Actions Recommended by Committee
Reports
September 7, 2002**

WASTEWATER

- 1) Overall Goal: To bring the Sconset Wastewater Treatment Facility into compliance with Massachusetts DEP code.
Recommendations: The overriding concern of Sconset residents appears to be the effect the treatment plant will have on the land development, new building, and the its effect upon community character. The committee offers the following recommendations with respect to this issue.
The simplest, most effective, and in the long term, most financially prudent solutions to mitigate the effect of further development in Sconset are:
 - a) For landowners to opt not to build dwellings on undeveloped land.
 - b) For landowners to opt not to build second dwellings on land with one dwelling extant.
 - c) For landowners to institute conservation restrictions or preservation restrictions wherever possible on land that they own.
 - d) For the Town to pass a second dwelling restriction in the Sconset Zoning District.
 - e) For Sconseters to support the Sconset Trust through gifts of money or land.

ZONING AND PRESERVATION

- 1) Create “Village” category complementing the “Town” and “Country” categories in the Comprehensive Plan seeking ‘Sconset Village Area Plan approval at Town Meeting.
- 2) Develop preservation guidelines by architectural neighborhood to be adopted under a ‘Sconset Village Overlay District (SVOD).
- 3) Develop character-protecting decision criteria (Example - Seek a "zoning discretionary dimensional regulation system" in conjunction with adoption of character-protecting special permit decision criteria. A major objective of conventional zoning is to create uniformity within a zoning district. Yet, we

know that the character of 'Sconset is based on anything but uniformity. In reality, development patterns in 'Sconset have great dimensional variability, often with broad variations in the size of homes and lots from one block or neighborhood to another. Consequently, the expected outcome of the application of existing zoning bylaw dimensional requirements is often in conflict with the character of established building scale and development patterns. The HDC's guidelines have similar limitations. The implementation of character-protecting decision criteria is a different approach – one that carefully considers the historic context expressed in design, bulk, and scale from neighborhood to neighborhood, and one that applies that context to guide infill development in 'Sconset)

- 4) Develop zoning basic dimensional regulations (e.g., height, scale, groundcover) with SVOD.
- 5) Develop a discretionary dimensional regulation system (e.g. height, scale, groundcover according to neighborhood with an appeal process) within the SVOD.
- 6) Improve reflection of 'Sconset character in architectural designs.
- 7) Employ information, education, voluntary restrictions.
- 8) Employ guidelines adopted under a zoning overlay district.
- 9) Reduce future build-out potential by voluntary action and policy statements and encouraging acquisitions or easements.
- 10) Explore options for regulating secondary dwellings.
- 11) Explore other avenues to limit growth such as tax incentives for those who volunteer to give up their secondary dwelling potential.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- 1) Sell secondary dwellings for affordable housing. This has the virtue of providing housing without increasing housing density and offers the means for a property owner to raise funds without having to sell the entire property and perhaps be forced to leave Nantucket.
- 2) Purchase and develop suitable properties for resale, in part, as affordable housing. This approach will require assistance in absorbing the high market costs of land and construction.
- 3) Follow and capitalize on developments that spin out of *Nantucket Resident Housing Partnership's* \$53 million program proposal. Some may be useful for 'Sconset. Conversely, if they appear to threaten village planning objectives, we will work to adjust them. We intend to maintain a constructive voice in island-wide as well as local developments.
- 4) Keep abreast of real estate developments that represent opportunities for quality, affordable housing and which, in the hands of the wrong Chapter 40B developer, might do violence to the character of 'Sconset we seek to preserve.

- 5) Have discussions with financing sources known to have a special interest in affordable housing with the hope of discovering the means to soften the market-cost burden that threatens this activity.
- 6) Communicate developments in the pursuit of affordable housing of interest to 'Sconset residents as well as the broader island audience. Probably, the first step will be to disclose the details of the second-house program as soon as it is signed into law.

WATER

Implement five-year modernization plan:

- a) Upgrade/replace existing well and pumping facilities.
- b) Construct a new water tower.
- c) Institute water restrictions on Nantucket island-wide
- d) Install water meters as mandated by State.

TRAFFIC AND SAFETY

- 1) Speed
 - a) Legalize 20 MPH in core of village
 - b) Police enforcement of speed limits
 - c) Use of traffic calming techniques
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 - ii) Crosswalks and speed humps on Morey Lane in anticipation of increased building off Low Beach Road
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 - a) Aggressive ticketing for violations
 - b) Encourage homeowners to create and use off-street parking
 - c) Where on-street parking is necessary, encourage placement of vehicles at extreme right side of lane in order to maintain a fire lane and free flow of traffic
- 3) Enforcement of Existing Street and Sidewalk Bylaws and Encroachment Policy
 - a) Education of property owners by Civic Association
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- 4) Bicycles
 - a) Education of bicyclists
 - i) On-going revision and distribution of booklet "Safety 'Sconset" (distribution

through real estate brokers, bike shops,
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- ii) Annual bike clinics
 - iii) Signs
 - iv) Extension of bike path from Milestone Road to Morey Lane
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- a) Aggressive enforcement of loading zone
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- a) Viewing of hazardous corners and intersections
 - b) Review of hedges and encroachments with traffic safety in mind
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 - e) Meet with Town Traffic and Safety Committee to consider new measures as needed

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

- 1) Work with NRTA office to expand and implement a public relations/incentive program to encourage 'Sconseters and visitors to 'Sconset to use public transportation.
- a) Put posters on village bulletin board.
 - b) Ask local realtors/renting agents to include flyers in renter's packets.
 - c) Work with Chamber of Commerce to provide information on travel to tourists planning to come to the Island.
 - d) Make announcements at Civic Association meetings. (Testimonials)
 - e) Place article in 'Sconset Trust June newsletter.

PEACE AND QUIET

- 1) Landscaping: Seek ways to encourage landscaping / lawn care companies to reduce noise:

- a) Identify the major landscape services that work in the 'Sconset area.
 - b) Provide residents and businesses in 'Sconset and equipment rental companies with facts on alternate equipment noise levels & costs. Then develop a strategy to work with contractors to use quieter equipment, perhaps using financial incentives.
 - c) Identify and enlist the landscape services that seem the most persuadable (and the property owners that employ them, especially large customers like the Casino and the Town of Nantucket) to substitute quieter equipment and try to use it within limited times and days.
 - d) Undertake a joint effort with the Noise Pollution Clearinghouse to get manufacturers/distributors to donate particularly quiet kinds and makes of equipment for use/demonstration in 'Sconset.
 - e) Encourage landscaping services to limit hours of operation in 'Sconset .
 - f) Consider incentives for firms that switch to quieter equipment
 - g) Recognize companies and property owners who cooperate with this program.
- 2) Construction: Seek ways to encourage property owners and construction companies to reduce noise:
- a) Identify major construction projects underway or about to be undertaken this year and next.
 - b) Recognize property owners and construction companies who cooperate with this program.
- 3) Airplane Noise:
- 3A) Implement the following short-term voluntary actions:
- a) Complain vigorously to the Nantucket Airport about airplane noise.
 - b) Take a leadership role with all members of the aviation community in pushing for the reduction of airplane noise. This means participating in all forums where the airplane noise issue is discussed and worked on (Noise Advisory Committee, Nantucket Memorial Airport management, Federal Aviation Administration, Nantucket Airport Commission, Aircraft Operators, Community Associations, the Media, Etc.).
 - c) Actively support the Nantucket Memorial Airport in using flight tracking technology.

- 3B) Implement the following long-term actions: Influence future aviation-related plans so that they help ease the airplane noise problem.
- a) Nantucket Memorial Airport's "Airport Improvement Plan" Actively oppose those elements of this plan which would bring Siasconset more airplane noise.
 - b) "Class C Airspace" - Understand it, support its establishment on Nantucket and mold it to help reduce airplane noise as well as to improve safety.

BEACH PRESERVATION

- 1) Manage existing dewatering systems.
- 2) Keep Sconset and Island community informed.
- 3) Raise necessary funds.
- 4) Design/propose additional systems in Sconset if new Lighthouse South system replicates Codfish Park accretion.
- 5) Analyze causes/options if new system is ineffective.
- 6) On an on-going basis, monitor research on innovative erosion control technologies.

LAND PRESERVATION

- 1) Implement a greenbelt around the village, containing within it the areas of development and maintaining a clear demarcation of country outside the village.
- 2) Conserve small areas within the village which might be preserved as open space.
- 3) Encourage property owners and public entities to obtain Preservation Restrictions on their properties or portions of their property, or to obtain Conservation Restrictions on some of the beautiful historic gardens in Sconset.
- 4) Work with the 'Sconset Trust and other non-profit conservation organizations on the island to obtain lands to keep them from development. This can be by purchase, by gift, or by some form of conservation restriction.
- 5) Work with 'Sconset area property owners to encourage them to place restrictions on the development of their properties.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

- 1) **PREPAREDNESS:** Identify those things 'Sconset can do in advance to be prepared if a disaster should hit. This might include marking roads, training people in first aid, making sure you have a command center, make sure you have radios, etc.

- 2) **RESPONSE:** Develop a plan to evacuate people from low areas, making sure your emergency forces know what to do in 'Sconset should a disaster hit the village.
- 3) **RECOVERY:** Work with town departments such as the Department of Public Works, to identify what needs to be organized for cleanup.
- 4) In preparing a disaster plan for 'Sconset, develop a complete inventory of all hazards and possible situations.
- 5) Conduct an Emergency Preparedness Seminar so that 'Sconset residents and those who will be involved in helping can be better prepared to anticipate a response to any emergency.

COMMUNICATIONS

- 1) Encourage using *Saving' Sconset* as a guide for communicating to others the essence of Sconset
- 2) Work with the 'Sconset Trust and the Civic Association to set up a distribution system for *Saving' Sconset* including meeting with realtors, architects, new homeowners, and to new members of the two organizations
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- 3) Work with the NP&EDC to meet with islanders to share information about the plans at different stages of the plan development.
- 4) Identify and articulate the connection between the Nantucket Comprehensive Plan and the goals of the 'Sconset Plan

'Sconset Village Area Plan:

Composite of Actions Recommended by Committee Reports

September 7, 2002

WASTEWATER

- 7) **Overall Goal:** To bring the Sconset Wastewater Treatment Facility into compliance with Massachusetts DEP code.

Recommendations: The overriding concern of Sconset residents appears to be the effect the treatment plant will have on the land development, new building, and the its effect upon community character. The committee offers the following recommendations with respect to this issue.

The simplest, most effective, and in the long term, most financially prudent solutions to mitigate the effect of further development in Sconset are:

- a) For landowners to opt not to build dwellings on undeveloped land.
- b) For landowners to opt not to build second dwellings on land with one dwelling extant.
- c) For landowners to institute conservation restrictions or preservation restrictions wherever possible on land that they own.
- d) For the Town to pass a second dwelling restriction in the Sconset Zoning District.
- e) For Sconseters to support the Sconset Trust through gifts of money or land.

ZONING AND PRESERVATION

- 12) Create "Village" category complementing the "Town" and "Country" categories in the Comprehensive Plan seeking 'Sconset Village Area Plan approval at Town Meeting.
- 13) Develop preservation guidelines by architectural neighborhood to be adopted under a 'Sconset Village Overlay District (SVOD).
- 14) Develop character-protecting decision criteria (Example - Seek a "zoning discretionary dimensional regulation system" in conjunction with adoption of character-protecting special permit decision criteria. A major objective of conventional zoning is to create uniformity within a zoning district. Yet, we know that the character of 'Sconset is based on anything but uniformity. In reality, development patterns in 'Sconset have great dimensional variability, often with broad variations in the size of homes and lots from one block or neighborhood to another. Consequently, the expected outcome of the application of existing zoning bylaw dimensional requirements is often in conflict with the character of established building scale and development patterns. The HDC's guidelines have similar limitations. The implementation of character-protecting decision criteria is a different approach – one that carefully considers the historic context expressed in design, bulk, and scale from neighborhood to neighborhood, and one that applies that context to guide infill development in 'Sconset)
- 15) Develop zoning basic dimensional regulations (e.g., height, scale, groundcover) with SVOD.

- 16) Develop a discretionary dimensional regulation system (e.g. height, scale, groundcover according to neighborhood with an appeal process) within the SVOD.
- 17) Improve reflection of 'Sconset character in architectural designs.
- 18) Employ information, education, voluntary restrictions.
- 19) Employ guidelines adopted under a zoning overlay district.
- 20) Reduce future build-out potential by voluntary action and policy statements and encouraging acquisitions or easements.
- 21) Explore options for regulating secondary dwellings.
- 22) Explore other avenues to limit growth such as tax incentives for those who volunteer to give up their secondary dwelling potential.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- 1) Sell secondary dwellings for affordable housing. This has the virtue of providing housing without increasing housing density and offers the means for a property owner to raise funds without having to sell the entire property and perhaps be forced to leave Nantucket.
- 8) Purchase and develop suitable properties for resale, in part, as affordable housing. This approach will require assistance in absorbing the high market costs of land and construction.
- 9) Follow and capitalize on developments that spin out of *Nantucket Resident Housing Partnership's* \$53 million program proposal. Some may be useful for 'Sconset. Conversely, if they appear to threaten village planning objectives, we will work to adjust them. We intend to maintain a constructive voice in island-wide as well as local developments.
- 10) Keep abreast of real estate developments that represent opportunities for quality, affordable housing and which, in the hands of the wrong Chapter 40B developer, might do violence to the character of 'Sconset we seek to preserve.
- 11) Have discussions with financing sources known to have a special interest in affordable housing with the hope of discovering the means to soften the market-cost burden that threatens this activity.
- 12) Communicate developments in the pursuit of affordable housing of interest to 'Sconset residents as well as the broader island audience. Probably, the first step will be to disclose the details of the second-house program as soon as it is signed into law.

WATER

Implement five-year modernization plan:

- a) Upgrade/replace existing well and pumping facilities.
- b) Construct a new water tower.
- c) Institute water restrictions on Nantucket island-wide

- d) Install water meters as mandated by State.

TRAFFIC AND SAFETY

- 7) Speed
 - d) Legalize 20 MPH in core of village
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Appendix B:

Article 25 and 26, 2004 ATM
SR-10 Zone

Article 25

(Zoning Bylaw Amendment: Establishment of ‘Sconset Residential-10 Zoning District)

PLANNING BOARD MOTION: Moved, that Chapter 139 (Zoning) of the Code of the Town of Nantucket be amended as follows (*NOTE: new language is shown as highlighted text; language to be deleted is shown by strikeout; these methods used to denote changes are not meant to become part of the final text*):

First, amend §139-3 (Districts enumerated), by adding to subsection B. Residential a new Zoning District ‘Sconset Residential–10 (SR-10), after ‘Sconset Residential-1, and before ‘Sconset Residential-2:

‘Sconset Residential-10 SR-10

Second, amend §139-16 (Intensity Regulations), Subsection A (Yard Setback), by inserting the following between R-10 and R-2:

<i>District</i>	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Front</i>	<i>Side/Rear</i>	<i>Frontage</i>	<i>Ground</i>
Defined	Lot Size	(feet)	(feet)	(feet)	Cover
<i>In §139-3+ (square feet)</i>					<i>Ratio</i>
SR-10	10,000	15	5	75	25%

Third, amend §139-18D (Table of Parking Requirements) by amending the Zoning designations listed under the heading “Principal and Accessory Uses “A” by changing the heading labeled “R-10” as follows:

R10/
SR10

Fourth, amend the “Zoning Map of Nantucket, Massachusetts” dated February 24, 1972, as amended and on file in the Office of the Town Clerk, by changing the existing zoning district on the following properties from SOH, SR-1, and SR-2, to SR-10, as indicated as follows, and in accordance with a map entitled: “Proposed Rezoning of Properties in the Vicinity of

Main Street in ‘Sconset’, dated January 2, 2004, on file with the Town Clerk, and to take any other actions as may be appropriate with respect thereto:

Assessor’s Map # Parcel #

First, property to be changed from SR-2 to SR-10:

73.3.1	2
73.3.1	3
73.3.2	4
73.3.1	6
73.3.3	45
73.4.2	35

Second, property to be changed from SR-1 to SR-10:

73.3.1	7
73.3.1	8
73.4.2	34

Third, property to be changed from SOH to SR-10:

73.3.1	9
73.3.1	10
73.3.1	11
73.3.1	46
73.3.1	47
73.3.1	48
73.3.1	49
73.3.1	50
73.3.1	51
73.3.1	51.1
73.3.1	74
73.4.2	25

Article 26

(Zoning Bylaw Amendment: Zoning Map Change, ‘SR-10 Zoning District)

PLANNING BOARD MOTION: Moved not to adopt the article.

PLANNING BOARD COMMENT: The Planning Board made a negative recommendation on this article solely because it was consolidated in Article 25.